

Bel Air Black High School  
Hays Street  
Bel Air  
public

This large utilitarian structure was built in 1924. In 1935 it became Bel Air's black high school. Until that time black students who wished to pursue their education past grammar school had to board in Baltimore. The building was partly funded by the Rosenwald Foundation, a Nashville-based philanthropic organization founded by Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932). Mr. Rosenwald became interested in rural black education while on a 1911 visit to Tuskegee Institute. He was at that time president of Sears, Roebuck Inc. He was later Chairman of the Board of Sears. The Harford County black community provided matching funds and some County funds were used.

When the school opened on January 3, 1935, there was only one teacher, Stephen Moore, who later became the principal. In 1951 when the new consolidated school at Hickory opened, this building ceased to have an educational function. Since then it has held County offices.

# MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

HA-1413  
1314134811

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Bel Air Black High School (Bel Air Colored High School)

AND/OR COMMON

Harford County Mental Health Annex

### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Hays Street

1st

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Harford

### 3 CLASSIFICATION

#### CATEGORY

\_\_\_DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_\_SITE

\_\_\_OBJECT

#### OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC

\_\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_\_BOTH

#### PUBLIC ACQUISITION

\_\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

#### STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

\_\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

#### ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_NO

#### PRESENT USE

\_\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

☒ GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_MILITARY

\_\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_\_PARK

\_\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_OTHER:

### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Harford County

Telephone #: 838-6000

STREET & NUMBER

45 S. Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21014

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Harford County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_FEDERAL \_\_\_STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

 DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE
 

---

This one and a half story shiplap sided building with a gable roof both broad and deep is on the east side of Hays Street just north of its intersection with the Baltimore Pike in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. The front (west) elevation is strongly divided into three bays. A group of five tall windows on each side flanks a gable roofed entrance porch carried on square posts. The porch gable cuts into the roof-line. The windows were originally 9/9 double-hung sash but the top nine were taken out and the opening boarded up when the ceiling inside was dropped in the 1975 remodeling. The entrance, which is slightly stepped-back from the plane of the front elevation, is also new. It consists of an aluminum framed pair of glass doors with a single pane transom and a pair of single pane side lights.

The ridge line of the asphalt shingle roof goes north and south and is broken by a couple of ventilators and three plain capped chimneys, originally for stoves, two at the peak of the ridge, just inside the north and south gable ends and one farther in on the north side and about half way down the roof slope.

The north elevation shows two oblong ventilators in the gable, a pair of windows just west of center (shorter than the front ones but also 9/9 with the top half removed & set in similar plain surrounds) and a side entrance porch, gable roofed & carried on thin square posts, just east of center. The five panel wooden door is probably original.

The south elevation shows two ventilators in the gable and has a shed-roofed addition of rock-faced cement block in the first story. This addition has a door east and west near the south end and a pair of small windows just under the eaves in the south elevation. This shed was originally divided in two, as its construction suggests, and was the restroom facility for the boys and girls.

In 1975, the interior was gutted, the building insulated & the ceiling dropped. It is now small offices. It was originally three rooms, two to the south, and one (larger) to the northeast.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

HA-1413

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		Black History	

SPECIFIC DATES

1924

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Harry W. Orsburn

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This entirely utilitarian frame building is of considerable importance to Bel Air's black community. It is the only remaining building in Bel Air associated with the period of segregated schooling. In 1924 it was built to supplement the small school-house, originally one room but subdivided into two rooms by then, which had been moved to the Hays Street site in 1883 after the white scholars had outgrown it. It was partially funded by the Rosenwald Foundation.

Black education in Maryland was haphazard and mostly non-existent in ante-bellum days. As far as a public tax-supported system, education for whites was not in much better shape. The 1851 state constitution made no provision for a school system. By 1864 each County had some system, but there was no uniformity and no provision for black education. The constitution of 1864 provided for a uniform system but not for blacks, many of whom were still slaves. A state law of 1870 gave counties permission to open state-supported schools for blacks, but there was no compulsion to do so. That year there were 97,761 white students in the system. Black students numbered 7,674.

In Baltimore City, a handful of citizens formed the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People and, with the help of northern relief societies and the Freedman's Bureau, founded 25 schools with 3,000 students. The association paid the teachers and the Freedman's Bureau provided the buildings. There were three Freedman's Bureau schools in Harford County, none in Bel Air.

Bel Air's first public school was built by John F. Ligan in 1870. Located on Main Street, this small building, a picture of which can be found in Milton Wright's history of Harford County (p. 247), housed all the public school students in one room.

In 1872, the state provided for the establishment of one school for blacks in each election district providing that the average attendance was 15. That brought Bel Air its first school for blacks. There is no record of where the school was. In 1883, after the opening of the new brick school building for whites on Gordon Street, the little school on Main Street was moved to Hays Street and used for black students. In 1907, the Gordon Street School became Bel Air High School and by 1910 the school offered a four year program.

There was no high school for blacks. For that matter, in all of Maryland only Baltimore City had a black high school. Blacks from the counties who wanted to continue their education had to pass a stiff entrance exam and board in Town to go to school. The 1940 census showed that only 3.4% of Maryland blacks had completed four years of high school.

Black education in Maryland in those years was certainly separate but rarely, if ever, equal to the education provided for whites. The length of the school year was shorter for black students than it was for whites, probably because the black

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with Stephen Moore, June 29, 1979  
 Walsh and Fox, Maryland, A History 1632 - 1974. Baltimore, 1974  
 Milton Wright, Our Harford Heritage.  
 E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States. New York, 1946  
 ✓ Horace Mann Bond, The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order.  
 New York, 1934

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property occupies the south part of parcel #1232 in the Town of Bel Air.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marilynn Larew, Architectural Historian

17 July 1979

ORGANIZATION

Town of Bel Air

DATE

838-8700

STREET & NUMBER

39 Hickory Avenue

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438



children were needed in the fields for planting and harvesting. Salaries for black teachers was less too. In 1918 the minimum for a white teacher was \$300 a year. For black teachers it was \$280. Maryland spent less per pupil for black students. In the mid-1930's the state spent \$67.61 per white student and \$48.01 per black students. Suits in Federal court finally equalized the salary scales in 1940.

By 1920 it became clear that a new building was needed on Hays Street. In 1923, a bill allowing the County to sell bonds for school construction passed the legislature and was approved by the voters in the November election. The following year (1924) the present structure was built by Harry W. Orsburn at a cost of \$6570.

Funding for the school was provided by the County and by matching funds from the local community and the Rosenwald Foundation. The Rosenwald Foundation was a Nashville-based philanthropic organization founded by Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932). Mr. Rosenwald became interested in rural black education after a visit to Tuskegee Institute in 1911. He was at that time president of Sears, Roebuck, Inc. The Foundation always required matching funds from the community and the school system. It stressed co-operation with county school boards and emphasized black and white community co-operation. Contributions were made to every level of black education, and grants were made to students for advanced study. In 1928 Rosenwald endowed the foundation with 200,000 shares of Sears, Roebuck stock. He was at that time Chairman of the Board. In order to prevent the foundation from hoarding the money he ordered that it all had to be spent within 25 years of his death. When he died in 1932, 5,357 school buildings had been built housing 663,615 students, which meant that between 25 and 40% of all black children were educated in Rosenwald schools. Of a total of \$28,408,520 cost of construction, the fund had contributed 15%, the black community 17%, local white friends 4%, and the public tax fund 64%.

Between 1924 and 1935 the present building supplemented the old building. On January 3, 1935, the building became the black high school in the County; Mr. Stephen Moore who later became principal was the only teacher. There was no transportation either to the Bel Air school or the one established in 1930 in Havre de Grace. Pupils walked or boarded in Town to continue their education, but it was substantially closer than Baltimore. The school was heated by stoves the firing of which, along with all the cleaning, was the responsibility of the teacher since there were no funds for janitors. This was also true for the rural one and two room schools all over the County, black or white.

Both buildings were consistently overcrowded, and classes were also held at the Ames Methodist Church, the New Hope Baptist Church, and at the old fire house. The little three room school continued in service to black education for nearly twenty years, until the consolidated school at Hickory was built in 1951. Then all black elementary and high school students in the western half of the County were transported to Hickory. In 1966 all black students were finally integrated into the regular school system, and the era of segregated schooling in Harford County came to an end.

Since 1951 the old school has served the County as office space. At present it houses the Mental Health Annex. It has been renovated by being insulated and having its ceiling dropped. The three classrooms have disappeared, and the building now has small offices.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
21 STATE CIRCLE  
SHAW HOUSE  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY FIELD SHEET  
Individual Structure Survey Form

SURVEY NUMBER: HA-1413

NEGATIVE FILE NUMBER:

UTM REFERENCES:  
Zone/Easting/Northing

U.S.G.S. QUAD. MAP:

PRESENT FORMAL NAME:  
Harf. Co. Mental Health Ctr. Annex

ORIGINAL FORMAL NAME:  
Bel Air Colored School

PRESENT USE: County offices

ORIGINAL USE: School

ARCHITECT/ENGINEER:

BUILDER/CONTRACTOR:  
Harry W. Orsburn

PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE:  
Excellent( ) Good(X)  
Fair( ) Poor:( )

THEME: Architecture

STYLE: Vernacular

DATE BUILT:

1924

COUNTY: Harford

TOWN: Bel Air

LOCATION: S. Hays near the Balto.  
Pike

COMMON NAME:  
Old Black High School

FUNCTIONAL TYPE: School

OWNER: Harford County S. part of  
ADDRESS: 45 S. Main p. 1232  
Bel Air, Md. 401/380

ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC:  
Yes( ) No( ) Restricted(X)

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:  
Local(X) State( ) National( )

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Structural System

1. Foundation: Stone(X) Brick( ) Concrete( ) Concrete Block( )
2. Wall Structure
  - A. Wood Frame: Post and Beam( ) Balloon( )
  - B. Wood Bearing Masonry: Brick( ) Stone( ) Concrete( ) Concrete Block( )
  - C. Iron( ) D. Steel( ) E. Other:
3. Wall Covering: Clapboard( ) Board and Batten( ) Wood Shingle( ) Shiplap(X)  
Novelty( ) Stucco( ) Sheet Metal( ) Aluminum( ) Asphalt Shingle( )  
Brick Veneer( ) Stone Veneer( )  
Bonding Pattern: Other:
4. Roof Structure
  - A. Truss: Wood( ) Iron( ) Steel( ) Concrete( )
  - B. Other:
5. Roof Covering: Slate( ) Wood Shingle( ) Asphalt Shingle(X) Sheet Metal( )  
Built Up( ) Rolled( ) Tile( ) Other:
6. Engineering Structure:
7. Other: entrance 3

Appendages: Porches(X) Towers( ) Cupolas( ) Dormers( ) Chimneys(X) Sheds(X) Ells( )  
Wings( ) Other:

Roof Style: Gable(X) Hip( ) Shed( ) Flat( ) Mansard( ) Gambrel( ) Jerkinhead( )  
Saw Tooth( ) With Monitor( ) With Bellcast( ) With Parapet( ) With False Front( )  
Other:

Number of Stories: 1-1/2

Number of Bays: 3

Approximate Dimensions:

Entrance Location: Hays St.

THREAT TO STRUCTURE:  
No Threat(X) Zoning( ) Roads( )  
Development( ) Deterioration( )  
Alteration( ) Other:

LOCAL ATTITUDES:  
Positive( ) Negative( )  
Mixed( ) Other:

ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL OR STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Green with yellow trim  
 5 window group door 5 window group  
 windows were 9/9 top 9 boarded up  
 Central pav projects over door has gable carried on square posts  
 ridge line N-S shed side addit = rock faced cement block  
 1 sq. window W & E 2 S(now ventilators)  
 Boarded up / north side 2 vents in gable pair windows S. of center  
 3/3 top boarded side entrance E of center W gable porch, square  
 posts  
 plain cap chimneys S inside gable N to E of ridge in gable  
 one in center of W slope (front) near gable

RELATED STRUCTURES: (Describe)

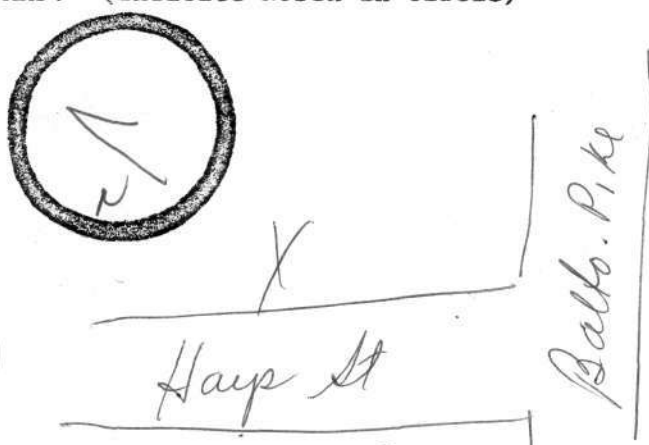
front door glass & aluminum  
 transom  
 2 doors  
 side lights

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Black high school  
 remodeled 1975

REFERENCES:

MAP: (Indicate North In Circle)

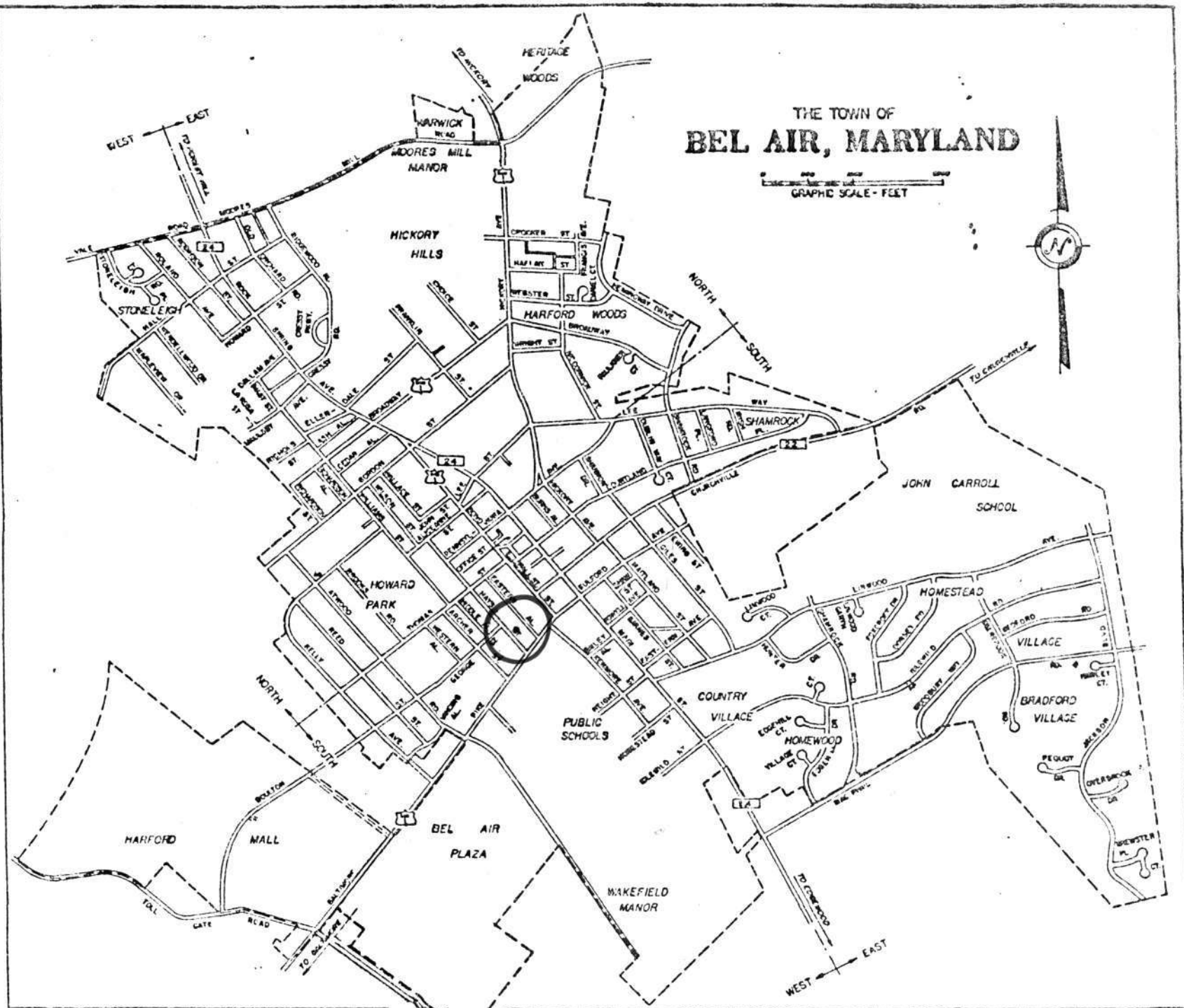


SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:

Open Lane( ) Woodland( ) Scattered Buildings( )  
 Moderately Built Up( ) Densely Built Up( )  
 Residential( ) Commercial( )  
 Agricultural( ) Industrial( )  
 Roadside Strip Development( )  
 Other: and govt. offices

M. Larew  
 RECORDED BY:  
 Town of Bel Air  
 ORGANIZATION:  
 30 June 1979  
 DATE RECORDED:

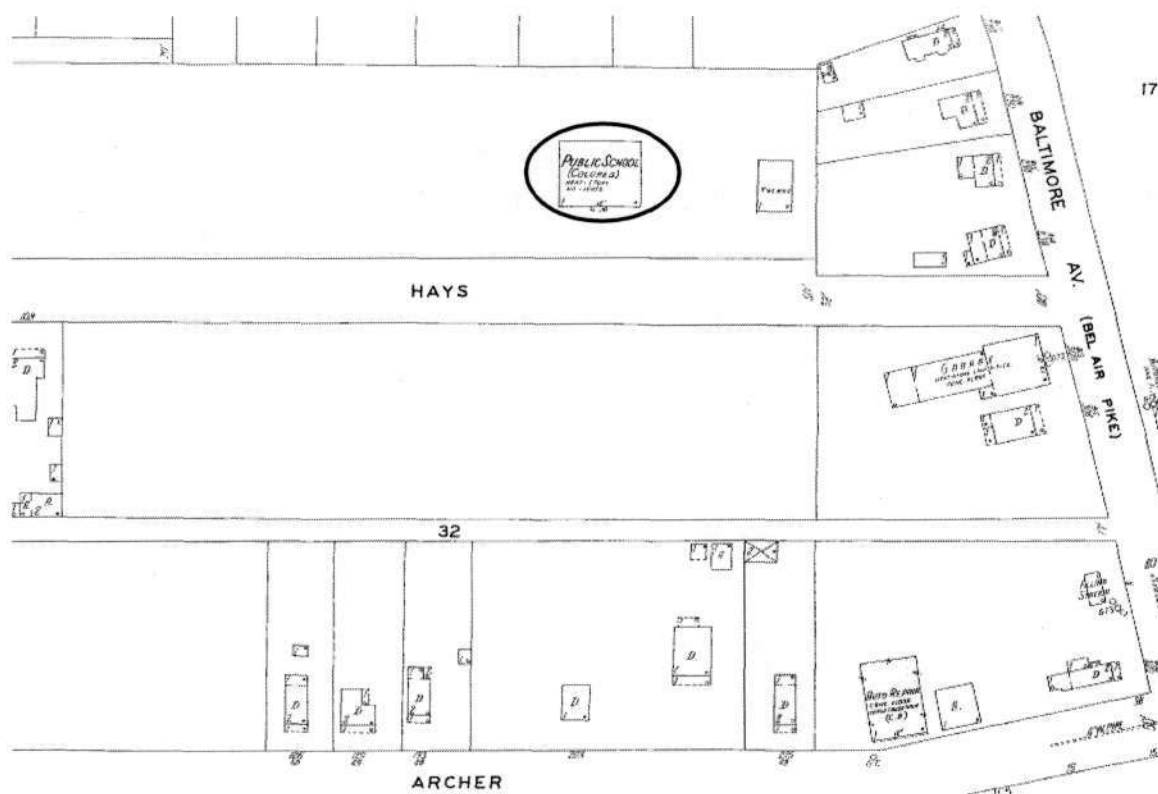




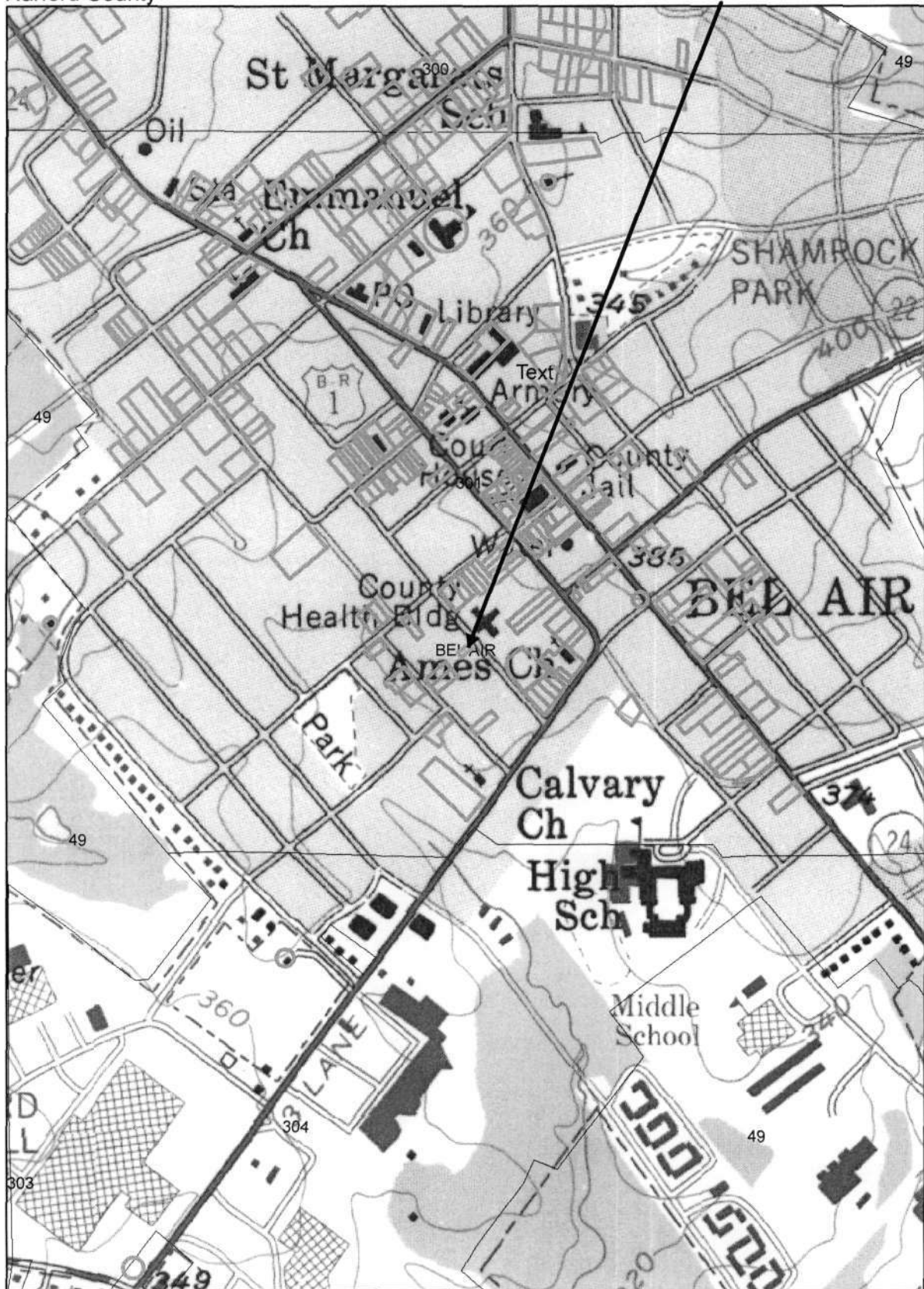
HA-1413

Bel Air Black High School  
Hays St.

HA-1413  
Bel Air Black (Colored) High School  
Hays St.  
Bel Air  
Sanborn Bel Air Aug. 1930  
Harford County



HA-1413  
Bel Air Black (Colored) High School  
Hays Street  
Bel Air  
Bel Air Quad  
Harford County





HA-1413

Bel Air Black High School, 205 Hays St

Bel Air

detail of entrance, w. elev

M. Larew, 1979





HA-1413

Bel Air Black High School, 205 Hays St

Bel Air

was elev

M. Larew, 1979



44-1413 Bel Air Black High School, 205 Hays St  
Bel Air  
NW elev  
M. Larew, 1979





HA - 1413



HA-1413



HA-1413